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for Literature

Because of Winn-Dixie

Kate DiCamillo



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How to Use This Literature Guide

Today's standards demand rigor and relevance in the reading of complex texts. The units in this series guide teachers in a rich and deep exploration of worthwhile works of literature for classroom study. The most rigorous instruction can also be interesting and engaging!

Many current strategies for effective literacy instruction have been incorporated into these instructional guides for literature. Throughout the units, text-dependent questions are used to determine comprehension of the book as well as student interpretation of the vocabulary words. The books chosen for the series are complex and are exemplars of carefully crafted works of literature. Close reading is used throughout the units to guide students toward revisiting the text and using textual evidence to respond to prompts orally and in writing. Students must analyze the story elements in multiple assignments for each section of the book. All of these strategies work together to rigorously guide students through their study of literature.

The next few pages describe how to use this guide for a purposeful and meaningful literature study. Each section of this guide is set up in the same way to make it easier for you to implement the instruction in your classroom.

Theme Thoughts

The great works of literature used throughout this series have important themes that have been relevant to people for many years. Many of the themes will be discussed during the various sections of this instructional guide. However, it would also benefit students to have independent time to think about the key themes of the book.

Before students begin reading, have them complete the *Pre-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 13). This graphic organizer will allow students to think about the themes outside the context of the story. They'll have the opportunity to evaluate statements based on important themes and defend their opinions. Be sure to keep students' papers for comparison to the *Post-Reading Theme Thoughts* (page 63). This graphic organizer is similar to the pre-reading activity. However, this time, students will be answering the questions from the point of view of one of the characters in the book. They have to think about how the character would feel about each statement and defend their thoughts. To conclude the activity, have students compare what they thought about the themes before they read the book to what the characters discovered during the story.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Vocabulary

Each teacher reference vocabulary overview page has definitions and sentences about how key vocabulary words are used in the section. These words should be introduced and discussed with students. Students will use these words in different activities throughout the book.

On some of the vocabulary student pages, students are asked to answer text-related questions about vocabulary words from the sections. The following question stems will help you create your own vocabulary questions if you'd like to extend the discussion.

- How does this word describe _____'s character?
- How does this word connect to the problem in this story?
- How does this word help you understand the setting?
- Tell me how this word connects to the main idea of this story.
- What visual pictures does this word bring to your mind?
- Why do you think the author used this word?

At times, you may find that more work with the words will help students understand their meanings and importance. These quick vocabulary activities are a good way to further study the words.

- Students can play vocabulary concentration. Make one set of cards that has the words on them and another set with the definitions. Then, have students lay them out on the table and play concentration. The goal of the game is to match vocabulary words with their definitions. For early readers or English language learners, the two sets of cards could be the words and pictures of the words.
- Students can create word journal entries about the words. Students choose words they think are important and then describe why they think each word is important within the book. Early readers or English language learners could instead draw pictures about the words in a journal.
- Students can create puppets and use them to act out the vocabulary words from the stories. Students may also enjoy telling their own character-driven stories using vocabulary words from the original stories.

How to Use This Literature Guide *(cont.)*

Guided Close Reading *(cont.)*

The generic open-ended stems below can be used to write your own text-dependent questions if you would like to give students more practice.

- What words in the story support . . . ?
- What text helps you understand . . . ?
- Use the book to tell why ____ happens.
- Based on the events in the story, . . . ?
- Show me the part in the text that supports
- Use the text to tell why

Making Connections

The activities in this section help students make cross-curricular connections to mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, or other curricular areas. These activities require higher-order thinking skills from students but also allow for creative thinking.

Language Learning

A special section has been set aside to connect the literature to language conventions. Through these activities, students will have opportunities to practice the conventions of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

Story Elements

It is important to spend time discussing what the common story elements are in literature. Understanding the characters, setting, plot, and theme can increase students' comprehension and appreciation of the story. If teachers begin discussing these elements in early childhood, students will more likely internalize the concepts and look for the elements in their independent reading. Another very important reason for focusing on the story elements is that students will be better writers if they think about how the stories they read are constructed.

In the story elements activities, students are asked to create work related to the characters, setting, or plot. Consider having students complete only one of these activities. If you give students a choice on this assignment, each student can decide to complete the activity that most appeals to him or her. Different intelligences are used so that the activities are diverse and interesting to all students.

Vocabulary Overview

Key words and phrases from this section are provided below with definitions and sentences about how the words are used in the story. Introduce and discuss these important vocabulary words with students. If you think these words or other words in the story warrant more time devoted to them, there are suggestions in the introduction for other vocabulary activities (page 5).

Word	Definition	Sentence about Text
preacher (ch. 1)	a person whose job is to give religious speeches and lead religious ceremonies	Opal's daddy is a preacher at the Open Arms Baptist Church.
produce section (ch. 1)	the part of a grocery store where fresh vegetables and fruits are sold	The dog knocks tomatoes, onions, and green peppers onto the floor of the produce section .
skidded (ch. 1)	slid across the floor in an uncontrolled way	The dog came running around the corner and skidded to a stop.
hind (ch. 1)	at or near the back of something	The dog stands up on his hind legs so he can get face to face with the store manager.
pound (ch. 1)	place where animals that are found on the streets without an owner are kept until an owner can be found for them	Opal does not want the stray dog to be sent to the pound .
cashiers (ch. 1)	people whose job is to collect the payments for purchases in a store	Opal walks past the cashiers at the front of the store and out the door.
missionary (ch. 2)	a person who is sent to a foreign country to do religious work	Opal's daddy was a missionary in India before she was born.
stray (ch. 2)	an animal (such as a cat or dog) that is lost or has no home	It is obvious that the thin, dirty, unkempt dog is a stray .
constellations (ch. 4)	groups of stars that form particular patterns in the sky and have names	Opal's mother could identify all the constellations in the sky.
mutt (ch. 5)	a dog with parents of different breeds	Winn-Dixie is a mutt , but he appears to be part retriever.

Guided Close Reading

Closely reread the section that starts at the beginning of chapter 2 with, “That summer I found Winn-Dixie” Stop with, “. . . I loved him with all my heart.”

Directions: Think about these questions. In the space below, write ideas as you think about the answers. Be ready to share your answers.

❶ Use details from the text to explain why Opal calls her daddy “the preacher.”

❷ Although her given name is India Opal, the main character goes by Opal. What reason is given for this in the text?

❸ What words or phrases does Opal use to describe Winn-Dixie?

Name _____ Date _____

Story Elements—Character

Directions: Choose a character from the story. Write the name of that character on the top line below. Think about this character and the different ways he or she looks and acts. Also, think about how other characters react or think of your character. You can draw your character in the first box. Make sure to describe your character with words, as well.

Character: _____

What does the character look like?

What is the character's personality?

What do other characters in this story think of this character?